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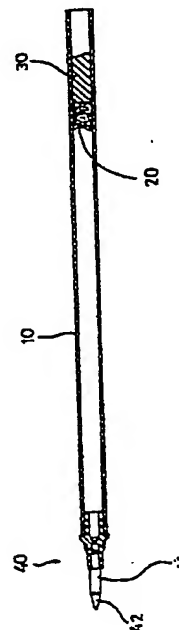
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(54) METHOD OF MANUFACTURING INK FOLLOWER FOR WATER BASE BALLPOINT PENS

(57) A method of manufacturing an ink follower for water-base ballpoint pens, in which a thickener is constant in dispersibility for each manufacturing lot and viscosity variation is small and in which minute bubbles present in the thickener contained in the ink follower are removed, the method involves the step of uniformizing the thickener at any temperature in the range of 40 °C to 130 °C, preferably, in the range of 100 °C to 130 °C.

Fig. 1



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Description

Technical Field

5 [0001] The present invention relates to a method for manufacturing ink follower, which follows water-base ink filled in an ink reservoir of a ballpoint pen.

Background Art

10 [0002] The ink for a water-base ballpoint pen has a viscosity of as low as 50 mPa sec to 3 Pa sec, while the ink for an oil-base ballpoint pen, though it has a similar structure to a water-base one, has a viscosity of 3 to 20 Pa sec. Consequently, the ink filled in a water-base ballpoint pen may leak out when the pen is left upward or sideways. Moreover, even a small impact made on the pen may cause its ink to scatter and to stain the hand or the clothes.

[0003] There have been conventional arts for a water-base ballpoint pen with its ink in its ink reservoir that it is equipped ink follower composed of a gelled material, or a mixture of the gelled material and solid material.

15 [0004] The aims of the arts are to make the ink follower follow the ink smoothly, to make the pen endure the impact when dropped, to prevent the ink from back flow, to give the pen a good appearance, and so on.

[0005] A common feature of such arts is that the ink follower, which has pseudo-plasticity, is made from hardly-volatile or non-volatile solvent which is supplemented with some kind of thickener in order that the ink follower may not flow backward when the pen is left sideways or upward.

20 [0006] Moreover, conventional ink follower for water-base ballpoint pens often has very low viscosity and tenacity, as compared with that for conventional oil-base ballpoint pens, which often has equal viscosity to common grease used for lubricant. That is because of making the following property to the ink better.

[0007] Amount of the ink of a ballpoint pen necessary for writing varies depending upon the diameter of the ball. In an oil-base ballpoint pen for fine (0.5 mm) to bold (1.0 mm) letters, the amount is 10-30 mg per 100 m. On the other hand, in a water-base ballpoint pen for fine (0.3 mm) to bold (0.7 mm) letters, the amount is 50-300 mg per 100 m. Since the amount of the ink consumed for a water-base ballpoint pen is more than five- to ten-fold of that for an oil-base ballpoint pen, severe ink-following properties are requested for the ink follower for a water-base ballpoint pen. Thus the follower having low viscosity and tenacity have been used as compared with that for an oil-base ballpoint pen.

30 [0008] Lubricant grease with low viscosity and consistency generally has such low stability that oily matter likely separates when left to stand. In addition, if the thickener component in the lubricant grease is likely to move, it causes the grease to lose homogeneity easily by forming a mixture of coarse and dense portions. The lower the viscosity of the thickener of the grease is, the less effectively the thickener is dispersed by a disperser such as a double-roll mill, a triple-roll mill, a kneader or a planetary mixer, any one of which is suitable for substances with high viscosity. The thickener is, however, not so low in viscosity as to be capable of being mixed effectively by a disperser such as a bead mill, a sand mill or a homogenizer, any one of which is suitable for substances with low viscosity. Inefficient dispersion causes not only time-dependent instability but also lot-to-lot instability in viscosity and uniformity.

[0009] The ink follower for the water-base ballpoint pens consists of materials similar to the lubricant grease, and exhibits time-dependent behaviors based on similar physical laws.

40 [0010] Once the oil is separated due to a time-dependent change, it affects the surfactant in the ink. It weakens the effect of the ink in the surfactant and blocks the ink passage as oil droplets resulting in a bad influence on writing.

[0011] Moreover, if the thickener component in the ink follower lacks homogeneity, the ink follower is separated into a portion following the ink and portions adhering to the inner wall of the ink reservoir. The adhering portions not only give the pen an unpleasant appearance, but also mean a corresponding loss of the ink follower, resulting eventually in its failure to function of, for example, preventing the ink from volatilizing or from leaking.

45 [0012] The objects of this invention are to dissolve the defect that conventional ink follower for a water-base ballpoint pen has lot-to-lot and time-dependent instability of quality, and to provide a method for manufacturing the ink follower which has a better following property than the conventional ink follower for water-base ballpoint pens.

50 Disclosure of the Invention

[0013] As a result of our diligent study of above problems, we have found that, reduced viscosity and surface tension of the base oil under elevated temperature make it easy for particulate thickener such as silica, alumina and titanium oxide and clay thickener to disperse. We have also found that thickener, when homogenized very highly microscopically, always shows its best performance and that it produces increased time-dependent stability and reduced lot-to-lot difference. Thus we have completed our present invention.

[0014] Lubricant grease and ink follower for a water-base ballpoint pen are prepared from similar materials by similar processes, but are clearly different from each other from a technical standpoint.

[0015] The lubricant grease is usually used only for lubricating, and is, therefore, made to have high structural viscosity and yield value lest the oily constituent of the grease drip from a point where the grease is applied. On the other hand, the ink follower for a water-base ballpoint pen is held in a reservoir with no opening except its rear end, and is used in an environment in which there is no sliding matter except itself. Therefore, the structural viscosity and yield value of the ink follower may be low. It would rather be correct to say that it is necessary for the ink follower to be low in structural viscosity and yield value in order to follow the ink smoothly.

[0016] Fine particulate powder such as inorganic thickener (particulate silica, alumina or titanium dioxide), inorganic or organic pigment and fine resin particulate, which gains structural viscosity in liquid, generally shows a lower thickening effect and a lower yield value when it is well-dispersed.

[0017] The solvent used for the base oil for the ink follower is selected from polybutenes, liquid paraffin, highly purified mineral oil such as spindle oil, silicone oil such as dimethyl polysiloxane and methyl phenyl polysiloxane and so on. They do not dissolve in a water-base ink, and has only a small volatile loss. They generally have a better wetting property with resins, such as polypropylene, polyethylene and so on, used for an ink reservoir than that of water-base ink. Thus the consumption of the ink is easy to recognize.

[0018] Polybutenes and silicone oils, though some kinds of them are highly volatile, can withstand for two years or more at room temperature if their volatile loss is not more than about 0.2% by weight under a JIS C-2320 method at 98°C for five hours.

[0019] The volatility of polybutenes largely depends upon their molecular weight. Polybutenes with average molecular weight more than about 500 may satisfy the above volatile loss.

[0020] Since the volatile loss of silicone oils also depends upon their molecular structure, it cannot be determined only by their molecular weight. Therefore, the volatile loss of silicone oils is recommended to be measured practically by the method as described above.

[0021] Aerozyl R-972, R-974D, R-976D and RY-200 (trade names, Nippon Aerozyl) are preferable material for the thickener for the present invention. They may be used either solely or jointly and the total additional amount to the total amount of the ink follower is 1-10% by weight.

[0022] Although pseudo-plasticity can be given even when the amount is less than 1%, quantitative lack of the thickener is evident and separation of oil cannot be prevented. In addition, even if viscosity is increased using particulate silica, titanium oxide or aluminum as well as other powder such as inorganic and organic pigment whose BET specific surface area is around 50 m²/cm, to which pseudo-plasticity is most unlikely given, the pseudo-plasticity and the yield value at the amount more than 10% become so strong that the following property to ink becomes bad.

[0023] A more preferable range is 2-6% by weight to the total amount of the ink follower. Within such a range of additional amount, it is possible to prevent the oil separation and also to ensure a good following property to ink.

[0024] Hydrophilic thickener, such as Aerozyl #200, 380, 300, 100 and OX50 (Nippon Aerozyl Co., Ltd.), particulate alumina and ultra-particulate titanium dioxide, both of which are manufactured by a gaseous phase method of the same company, and the mixture of these materials can be prevented from interfering with the ink when the ink follower contains the substances such as surfactant, silane coupling agent, fluorocarbon, and methylhydrogen silicone, each of which has a hydrophilic-lipophilic balance (HLB) value of less than 4, preferably of less than 2. When silicone oil is used for base oil of the ink follower, it is often possible for the ink follower, without adding other substance, to avoid interfering with the ink.

[0025] It is effective to use additive such as surfactant to the ink follower in order to improve its property of following the ink.

[0026] Even irrespective of the kind of surfactant, it is not preferable to use the surfactant that dissolves in the ink during storage, but preferable to use nonionic surfactant with an HLB value less than 4. Moreover, the so-called fluorine-surfactant and silicone-surfactant are the most preferable additives since they can drastically lower the surface tension of the base oil.

[0027] It is also preferable for the object of this invention to add above-mentioned silane coupling agent, methylhydrogen silicone, etc. since they are effective for stabilization of the dispersion of the thickener, homogenization and hydrophobization. It is very preferable to use additives unless it makes an ill effect for the stability of the ink follower and for the quality of the ink.

[0028] The amount of these additives to be used is generally from 0.01%, which is minimal effective concentration, to about 5% by weight. The amount over 5% by weight does not produce any better result, though it may not present any problem in quality.

[0029] More preferred range is 0.1-1% by weight. Surfactant acts on the "surface" as its name shows and, therefore, the effect does not increase even if it is added too excessively. Rather, even when surfactant having very strong hydrophobicity is used, there are components having lipophilic groups in the ink and a bad influence may be resulted in view of a property of the pen as a whole. Therefore, too much use is not recommended in terms of stability with a lapse of time. According to the experiences of the present inventors, even in the case of a surfactant having an excellent characteristic property when used as base oil such as polyether-modified silicone, there was no change in terms of property

when its amount was more than 1%. In addition, there are some cases where the effect of surfactant becomes weak time-dependently due to decomposition or the like. When such cases are taken into consideration, it is questionable to make its amount to a minimum extent even if that is effective. From our experiences, there was no case where the effect of the surfactant was lost time-dependently when 0.1% or more was added.

5 [0030] Since the present invention includes a method for manufacturing, it will be illustrated in detail by way of Examples. Conceptionally, it is characterized in that the temperature is made higher than ambient temperature in a part of or most of the manufacturing processes whereby base oil and thickener are made compatible.

[0031] The temperature applied in the present invention is any temperature between 40°C and 130°C.

10 [0032] It is quite rare in Japan that, even in the midsummer, ambient temperature exceeds 40°C. Even when the ambient temperature becomes greatly higher than 40°C, it is still rare throughout the year that the temperature of the materials placed in a room becomes 40°C or higher. Thus, application of the temperature of 40°C or higher intentionally means the seasonal variation of the temperature during the manufacture is absorbed and, at the temperature lower than 40°C, the seasonal variation is unable to be absorbed unless intentional refrigeration is conducted. Although such intentional refrigeration contributes to a reduction in lot-to-lot difference, which is one of the objects of the present invention, that is contrary to the main object of the present invention that thickener is apt to be dispersed homogeneously by means of heating.

[0033] Temperature of 130°C means an upper limit of common steam heating. There are many heating methods such as electric heating and a direct fire and, although the heating method itself is out of question in the present invention, we have concluded that steam heating is the safest and simplest method.

20 [0034] Homogenization of ink follower was not affected even if heating was done at 130°C or higher. Rather, there were many cases where the low molecular components of the base oil or, in other words, the parts which were apt to be volatile were evaporated whereby the dispersion in the components for each lot of the base oil is apt to reflect the dispersion in the quality of the ink follower. In addition, some of additives such as surfactant are denatured at around 100°C although that may vary depending upon the heating time and, accordingly, excessive heating is not preferred.

25 [0035] Under an atmosphere of ordinary pressure, more preferred temperature range intended in the present invention is from 100°C to 130°C when thickener in fine particles is used while, when clay thickener is used, heating at not higher than 60°C or non-heating is preferred before the dispersing step such as by a triple-roll mill because of the use of a low molecular alcohol for swelling the clay thickener. After that, the temperature may be from 60°C to 130°C.

[0036] Powder of inorganic particulates and clay thickener as well as other materials absorb moisture in air during storage but, since the moisture can be removed by heating at 100°C or higher, quality is more stabilized when a step of 100°C or higher is included.

[0037] Low molecular alcohol with a carbon number about one to four is used as auxiliary agent in the case of clay thickener. Although this auxiliary agent is evaporated and removed finally, it should be present until the step where the shearing force is applied mostly strongly and the total system is to be kept at 60°C or lower.

35 [0038] When the auxiliary agent is completely evaporated, heating at 100°C or higher is preferred for excluding the moisture in the material but, if the auxiliary agent remains, it is preferred that the auxiliary agent is gradually evaporated at around 60°C-80°C.

[0039] When a rapid heating is carried out, the auxiliary agent is boiled whereby the dispersed system which is expressly homogenized may be damaged.

40 [0040] The above-mentioned temperature range is not preferred when the ink follower is subjected to a debubbling treatment in a reduced atmosphere. This is because low molecular components and additives in the base oil are evaporated therefrom.

[0041] The temperature may also vary depending upon the degree of vacuation and is preferably 60°C or lower when vacuated to an extent of about 0.1 atm (10 kPa) or lower.

45 [0042] The essential object of the present invention is that viscosity and surface tension of the base oil are reduced by raising the temperature whereby thickener and base oil are made compatible. Accordingly, it is preferred to heat at 60°C or higher even in the process for manufacturing ink follower including a vacuating step. Even in such a case, however, it is still preferred to cool at 60°C or lower followed by vacuating.

[0043] Another example where application of temperature is effective is a step for diluting the concentrated dispersion.

50 [0044] In a method for a homogeneous dispersing of the powder of inorganic particulates and the clay thickener, a disperser for high viscosity such as a double-roll mill, a triple-roll miller, a kneader and a planetary mixer is used. In such a machine, substance of higher viscosity is more efficiently dispersed. Therefore, there may be the cases where all of the substrate components are not added initially but the components are dispersed in high concentrations, or where only highly viscous components in the base oil components are dispersed and then the residual base oil components are added thereto to dilute.

55 [0045] In such cases, activity of the base oil components is higher and a more homogeneous mixing is resulted when the temperature of the base oil components which are added later is raised to 40°C or higher and then added. It

is still better that the addition is not conducted at a time but is done for several times little by little with stirring whereby a homogeneous state is resulted within shorter time as a result.

[0046] An example for a method of filling the ink follower of the present invention is that the ink is filled in an ink reservoir, a pen point is attached and then ink follower is charged. After that, a strong centrifugal force is applied by means of a centrifugal separator in the direction of from the tail end to the pen point whereby the ink follower is filled with a good appearance containing no air or the like between the ink and the ink follower.

Brief Explanation of the Drawing

Fig. 1 is a cross-section showing a holder of a water-base ballpoint pen using the ink follower manufactured by a method of the present invention.

Best Mode for Carrying Out the Invention

The present invention will now be further illustrated by way of following Examples and Comparative Examples.

[0049] For the assembly of the ballpoint pen used in Test 3 and Test 4, a centrifugal separator of type H-103N manufactured by Kokusan Enshinki Co., Ltd. was used and a centrifugal force was applied at 2800 rpm for 10 minutes so as to apply the centrifugal force in a direction of from the tail end of the pen to the pen tip whereby the bubbles contaminated inside are eliminated.

[0050] The ink for a water-base ballpoint pen for Test 3 and Test 4 was prepared as follows.

Printex 25 (Carbon black; trade name of Degussa)	7 parts by weight
PVP K-30 (Polyvinylpyrrolidone; manufactured by GAF)	3.5 parts by weight
Glycerol	10 parts by weight
Potassium ricinolate	0.5 part by weight
Triethanolamine	1 part by weight
1,2-Benzisothiazolin-3-one	0.2 part by weight
Benzotriazole	0.2 part by weight
Water	27.2 parts by weight

The above components were kneaded by a bead mill. After that, coarse particles of carbon black were removed and then

Propylene glycol	20 parts by weight
Carbopol 940 (Polyacrylic acid of a cross-linked type; trade name of B.F. Goodrich)	0.4 part by weight
and	
Water	30 parts by weight

were added thereto. Finally, ink having a viscosity of 500 mPa sec at 40 sec⁻¹ for a water-base ballpoint pen was prepared.

[0052] Each five lots of the following Examples and Comparative Example were prepared using the materials of the same lot. "MW =" for polybutene means its molecular weight. Unless otherwise mentioned, viscosity was measured at 25°C using a viscometer of type E manufactured by Toki Sangyo (using a 3° cone).

[0053] The material used was that which was allowed to stand at room temperature (10°C-25°C) unless otherwise mentioned.

Test 1. Viscosity Difference

[0054] Viscosity of the ink follower of the Examples and the Comparative Examples was measured. The viscosity was expressed as a ratio (in terms of %) of the maximum value to the minimum value among the five values of viscosity which was measured for one rotation at a cone angle of 3° using a viscometer of type E. The less the value is (the nearer to 100 the value is), the smaller the difference is.

Test 2. Time-Dependent Stability-1 (Bubbling Test)

[0055] Ten ballpoint pen holders shown in Fig. 1 for each lot of Examples 1-12 and Comparative Examples 1-8 (in other words, 50 pens for each Example or Comparative Example) were assembled and left upward in a water bath of 35°C for a month. The number of the product where bubbles were seen in the ink or at the interface between the ink and the ink follower was counted. The less the number is, the more preferable the result is.

[0056] For common grease, its test method for degree of oil separation is regulated in JIS K2220-5.7. As mentioned above, however, both object for use and aimed viscotenacity and viscoelasticity are entirely different between the common grease and the ink follower. Therefore, in the test according to the said test method, the ink follower leaks out keeping the viscotenacity whereby the test is unable to be carried out. Accordingly, in the present invention, the test was empirically substituted with the Test 3.

Test 3. Time-Dependent Stability-2 (Oil separation test)

[0057] Ten ballpoint pen holders as shown in Fig. 1 were assembled for each of the five lots of the products of the Examples and the Comparative Examples.

[0058] A semi-transparent polypropylene tube having an inner diameter of 4.0 mm was used as an ink reservoir (10) and ink (20) and ink follower (30) of each of the Examples and the Comparative Examples were filled therein. The pen point was equipped with a ball pen tip which was the same as that for a commercially available ballpoint pen (UM-100; trade name of Mitsubishi Pencil Co., Ltd.) as shown in Fig. 1. The material for the ballpoint pen tip holder (41) was a free-cutting stainless steel while the ball (42) was made of a tungsten carbide having a diameter of 0.5 mm.

[0059] The ballpoint pen equipped with the assembled holder (not shown) was allowed to stand in a water bath of 50°C for a month in such a state that the pen point was left upward and the numbers of the pens in which the oil was mixed with the ink were counted visually and were used as the points. There were ten pens for each lot and there were five lots for each Example or Comparative Example and, therefore, each Example or Comparative Example consisted of fifty samples whereby zero point was the best while fifty points was the worst.

Test 4. Time-Dependent Stability-3 (Writing Test after Preservation)

[0060] The same numbers of samples as in Test 3 were assembled and subjected to a spiral writing at the rate of 4.5 m/sec to observe the ink follower. When the ink follower rarely adhered to the inner wall of the ink reservoir and followed at the amount of about 18 mm or longer to the end of the test, the point was 5; when the amount was 10-18 mm, the point was 3; when it was 3-10 mm, the point was 1; and when it was 3 mm or less, the point was 0. Then four products for each lot or, in other words, 20 for each example were totaled. The top grade was 100 points while the lowest was 0 point and the higher the point was, the better the result was.

[0061] Now, the Examples and the Comparative Examples for the ink follower used in the above experiments will be illustrated as hereunder.

[0062] The Examples and the Comparative Examples were classified into groups I-V for each comparison and the evaluation was conducted relatively in each group.

Group I

Example 1

[0063]

Polybutene 100H (trade name of Idemitsu Kosan Co., Ltd.; MW = 960; viscosity: 19 Pa sec)	47.4 parts by weight
Aerozyl R-976D (hydrophobic silica; trade name of Nippon Aerozyl Co., Ltd.)	5 parts by weight

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(continued)

Eftop EF-801 (fluorine surfactant; trade name of Mitsubishi Material Co., Ltd.)	0.1 part by weight
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5 [0064] The above compounded substance was kneaded at ambient temperature for an hour using a planetary mixer (manufactured by Dalton Co., Ltd.; type 5DMV; equipped with an electric heater) to give a viscous gel-like substance 1A. After that,

10

Gel-like substance 1A	52.5 parts by weight
and	
Diana process oil MC-S32 (mineral oil; trade name of Idemitsu Kosan Co., Ltd.)	47.5 parts by weight

15

were weighed and stirred at 120°C for 30 minutes to give a product of Example 1.

Example 2

20

[0065] The same compounded substance as in Example 1 was treated with the same planetary mixer by kneading at 100°C to give a gel-like substance 2A. After that,

25

Gel-like substance 2A	52.5 parts by weight
and	
Diana process oil MC-S32	47.5 parts by weight

30

were weighed and stirred at 120°C for 30 minutes to give a product of Example 2.

Example 3

35

[0066]

40

Gel-like substance 2A	52.5 parts by weight
and	
Diana process oil MC-S32	47.5 parts by weight

45

were weighed and stirred at ambient temperature for 30 minutes to give a product of Example 3.

Comparative Example 1

50

[0067]

55

Gel-like substance 1A	52.5 parts by weight
and	
Diana process oil MC-S32	47.5 parts by weight

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were stirred at ambient temperature for 30 minutes using a planetary mixer (mentioned above) to give a product of Comparative Example 1.

Comparative Example 2

[0068] The same compounded substance as in Example 1 was treated with the same planetary mixer by kneading at 140°C to give a gel-like substance 2B. After that,

Gel-like substance 2B and	52.5 parts by weight
Diana process oil MCS32	47.5 parts by weight

were weighed and stirred at 140°C for 30 minutes to give a product of Comparative Example 2.

[0069] This group I was summarized and is shown in Table 1. Incidentally, unit of the temperature is °C while that of the time is minute(s).

Table 1

Group I				
	Planetary Mixer		Stirring	
	Temperature	Time	Temperature	Time
Example 1	room temp	60	120	60
Example 2	100	60	120	30
Example 3	100	60	room temp	30
Comp.Ex. 1	room temp	60	room temp	30
Comp.Ex. 2	140	60	140	30

Group II

Example 4

[0070]

Nissan polybutene 0.15N (trade name of NOF Co., Ltd.; MW = 580)	95 parts by weight
Aerozyl R-974D (hydrophobic silica; trade name of Nippon Aerozyl Co., Ltd.)	4 parts by weight
KBM 504 (silane coupling agent; trade name of Shin-Etsu Chemical Co., Ltd.)	1 part by weight

[0071] They were kneaded for an hour using a planetary mixer (mentioned above) heated at 130°C to give a product of Example 4.

Example 5

[0072] The same compounded substance as in Example 4 was kneaded for an hour using a planetary mixer (mentioned above) heated at 40°C to give a product of Example 5.

Comparative Example 3

[0073] The same compounded substance as in Example 4 was kneaded for an hour using a planetary mixer (mentioned above) kept at ambient temperature to give a product of Comparative Example 3.

Comparative Example 4

[0074] The same compounded substance as in Example 4 was kneaded for an hour using a planetary mixer (mentioned above) heated at 150°C to give a product of Comparative Example 4.

[0075] This group II was summarized and is shown in Table 2. Incidentally, unit of the temperature is °C while that of the time is minute(s).

Table 2

Group II		
	Planetary Mixer	
	Temperature	Time
Example 4	130	60
Example 5	40	60
Comp.Ex. 3	room temp	60
Comp.Ex. 4	150	60

Group III

Example 6

[0076]

Nissan polybutene 200SH (trade name of NOF Co., Ltd.; MW = 2650)	48.9 parts by weight
Aerozyl R-972 (hydrophobic silica; trade name of Nippon Aerozyl Co., Ltd.)	3 parts by weight
Silwet FZ-2122 (silicone surfactant; trade name of Nippon Unicar Co., Ltd.)	0.1 part by weight

[0077] The above compounded substance was kneaded once by a triple-roll mill (manufactured by Kodaira Seisakusho; 13 cm roll) where the roll surface was heated at 40°C by steam to give a gel-like substance 6A.

[0078] After that,

Gel-like substance 6A	52.0 parts by weight
and	
KF 54 (methyl phenyl silicone oil; trade name of Shin-Etsu Chemical Co., Ltd.)	48.0 parts by weight

were weighed in a mixing kneader (manufactured by Tokushu Kika Kogyo Co., Ltd.; type HM-2P) and kneaded at 40°C for an hour to give a product of Example 6.

Example 7

[0079]

5

Gel-like product 6A and KF-54	52.0 parts by weight 48.0 parts by weight
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10

were kneaded at 120°C for an hour using the same apparatus as in Example 6 to give a product of Example 7.

15 Example 8

[0080] The same compounded substance as for the gel-like product 6A of Example 6 was kneaded once using a triple-roll mill (mentioned above) where the temperature of the roll surface was made 120°C to give a gel-like product 8A.

20 [0081] After that,

25

Gel-like product 8A and KF 54	52.0 parts by weight 48.0 parts by weight
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30 were weighed in the mixing kneader (mentioned above) and kneaded at 120°C for an hour to give a product of Example 8.

Example 9

35 [0082] The same compounded substance as for the gel-like product 6A of Example 6 was kneaded once using a triple-roll mill (mentioned above) kept at ambient temperature to give a gel-like product 9A.

[0083] After that,

40

Gel-like product 9A and KF 54	52.0 parts by weight 48.0 parts by weight
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45

were weighed in the mixing kneader (mentioned above) and kneaded at 120°C for an hour to give a product of Example 9.

50 Comparative Example 5

[0084]

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Gel-like product 6A and	52.0 parts by weight
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(continued)

KF-54	48.0 parts by weight
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5 were kneaded at 140°C for one hour using the same apparatus as in Example 6 to give a product of Comparative Example 5.

Comparative Example 6

10 [0085] The same compounded substance as for the gel-like product 6A of Example 6 was kneaded once using a triple-roll mill (mentioned above) where the temperature of the roll surface was made 140°C to give a gel-like product 6B.

[0086] After that,

15

Gel-like product 6B and KF 54	52.0 parts by weight 48.0 parts by weight
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20

were weighed in the mixing kneader (mentioned above) and kneaded at 120°C for one hour to give a product of Comparative Example 6.

25 [0087] This group III was summarized and is shown in Table 3. Incidentally, unit of the temperature is °C while that of the time is minute(s).

Table 3

30

Group III				
	Roll Mill		Kneading	
	Temperature	Frequency	Temperature	Time
Example 6	40	once	40	60
Example 7	40	once	120	60
Example 8	120	once	120	60
Example 9	room temp	once	120	60
Comp.Ex. 5	40	once	140	60
Comp.Ex. 6	140	once	120	60

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45 Group IV

Example 10

[0088]

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KF96H (dimethyl silicone oil; trade name of Shin-Etsu Chemical Co., Ltd.; viscosity = 10 Pa sec)	36 part(s) by weight
Aerozyl #200 (fine particles of silica; trade name of Nippon Aerozyl Co., Ltd.)	3 parts by weight
TSF 484 (methyl hydrogen silicone; trade name of Toshiba Silicone Co., Ltd.)	1 part by weight

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[0089] They were preliminarily kneaded at 120°C for 30 minutes using a planetary mixer (mentioned above) and then kneaded twice using a triple-roll mill (mentioned above) at room temperature to give a gel-like product 10A.

[0090] Then,

Gel-like product 10A and KF54	40 parts by weight 60 parts by weight
-------------------------------------	--

were weighed in a planetary mixer (mentioned above) and stirred at ambient temperature for 30 minutes to give a product of Example 10.

Example 11

[0091] The same compounded substance for the gel-like product 10A of Example 10 was preliminarily kneaded at 40°C for 30 minutes and then kneaded twice at room temperature using a triple-roll mixer (mentioned above) to give a gel-like product 11A.

[0092] Then,

Gel-like product 11A and KF54	40 parts by weight 60 parts by weight
-------------------------------------	--

were weighed in a planetary mixer (mentioned above) and stirred at ambient temperature for 30 minutes to give a product of Example 11.

Comparative Example 7.

[0093] The same compounded substance for the gel-like product 10A of Example 10 was preliminarily kneaded at room temperature for 30 minutes and then kneaded twice at room temperature using a triple-roll mixer (mentioned above) to give a gel-like product 7B.

[0094] Then,

Gel-like product 7B and KF54	40 parts by weight 60 parts by weight
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were weighed in a planetary mixer (mentioned above) and stirred at ambient temperature for 30 minutes to give a product of Comparative Example 7.

[0095] This group IV was summarized and is shown in Table 4. Incidentally, unit of the temperature is °C while that of the time is minute(s).

Table 4

Group IV						
	Preliminary Kneading		Roll Mill		Stirring	
	Temperature	Time	Temperature	Frequency	Temperature	Time
Example 10	120	30	room temp	2	room temp	30
Example 11	40	30	room temp	2	room temp	30
Comp.Ex. 7	room temp	30	room temp	2	room temp	30

Group V

Example 12

[0096]

Nissan polybutene 200SH Benton 34 (organically treated bentonite; trade name of Wilber-Ellis)	36.5 parts by weight
Diglycerol dibehenyl ether	3 parts by weight
KBM 504	0.5 part by weight
Ethanol	0.5 part by weight
Diana process oil MC-S32	1 part by weight
	58.5 parts by weight

[0097] The above compounded substance was preliminarily stirred for 30 minutes (at ambient temperature) using a beaker made of stainless steel, kneaded twice using a triple-roll mill (at ambient temperature) and kneaded for one hour using a planetary mixer (mentioned above) wherein the inner area was at 60°C and about 0.1 atm to give a product of Example 12. Ethanol was evaporated and lost until completion of a treatment with the triple-roll mill.

Comparative Example 8

[0098] The same compounded substance as in Example 12 was preliminarily stirred for 30 minutes using a beaker made of stainless steel of 120°C, kneaded twice using a triple-roll mill (at ambient temperature) and kneaded for one hour using a planetary mixer (mentioned above) wherein the inner area was at 60°C and about 0.1 atm to give a product of Comparative Example 8. Ethanol was evaporated and lost until completion of a treatment with the triple-roll mill.

[0099] This group V was summarized and is shown in Table 5. Incidentally, unit of the temperature is °C while that of the time is minute(s).

Table 5

Group V						
	Preliminary Kneading		Roll Mill		Planetary mixer	
	Temperature	Time	Temperature	Frequency	Temperature	Time
Example 12	room temp	30	room temp	2	60	60
Comp.Ex. 8	120	30	room temp	2	60	60

[0100] Results of evaluation for each of those Examples and Comparative Examples are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Group	Sample Name	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4
I	Example 1	112	4	0	88
	Example 2	110	2	0	88
	Example 3	115	1	0	70
	Comp.Ex.1	128	15	2	60
	Comp.Ex.2	131	16	5	60
	Example 4	120	0	0	72
II	Example 5	121	6	2	60
	Comp.Ex.3	133	17	12	20
	Comp.Ex.4	151	0	0	52
	Example 6	111	8	0	90
	Example 7	109	0	0	100
III	Example 8	105	0	0	100
	Example 9	107	0	0	100
	Comp.Ex. 5	142	0	0	90
	Comp.Ex.6	161	0	0	90
	Example 10	110	2	0	98
IV	Example 11	111	6	0	82
	Comp.Ex. 7	125	10	15	60
V	Example 12	123	0	0	100
	Comp.Ex. 8	223	45	28	40

[0101] Viscosity difference in Test 1 varies depending upon the compounding and also on a disperser and, therefore, a relative comparison was carried out for each group.

About Group I:

[0102] In Example 1, the temperature reached 120°C upon stirring; in Example 3, it reached 100°C upon kneading by a planetary mixer; and, in Example 2, it reached 100°C upon kneading with a planetary mixer while, upon stirring, it reached 120°C. Among them, a higher evaluation was resulted in Example 2 as compared with Example 1 or 3.

[0103] Further, the evaluation for the product which was treated only at room temperature as in Comparative Example 1 was low. This is because, when the treatment was at room temperature, homogenization of the thickener was not fully achieved due to too low temperature. The evaluation was also low for the case where the temperature was raised to 140°C as in Comparative Example 2. This is because there is a boundary at 130°C and, when the temperature is higher than that, viscosity difference probably due to evaporation becomes big. Incidentally, the difference at room temperature was big presumably because the test period was from February to May.

About Group II:

[0104] Again, a higher evaluation was noted for Example 4 where the temperature was 130°C as compared with Example 5 where the temperature was 40°C.

[0105] The difference in temperature versus the difference in evaluation as noted in Example 4 and Example 5 as such is due to the fact that, although moisture in the air was absorbed with the power of inorganic particulates and the clay thickener as well as other materials during preservation, it was able to be removed by heating at 100°C or higher whereby the evaluation of Example 4 including a step of higher than 100°C was higher.

[0106] In addition, due to the same reason as in Group I, evaluations for Comparative Example 3 and Comparative Example 4 were low.

About Group III:

[0107] Again, as compared with Example 6 where both of the temperature upon the use of a roll mill and that upon kneading were 40°C, higher evaluations were noted for Example 7 and Example 9 where the temperature upon kneading was 120°C. Further, the evaluation was far higher in the case of Example 8 where both of the above were 120°C. The difference in temperature versus the difference in evaluation as such is due to the fact that, although moisture in the air was absorbed with the power of inorganic fine particles and the clay thickener as well as other materials during preservation, it was able to be removed by heating at 100°C or higher whereby the evaluations of Examples 7, 8 and 9 including a step of higher than 100°C were higher.

[0108] On the contrary, the evaluations were lower in Comparative Example 6 where the temperature upon the use of the roll mill was 140°C and in Comparative Example 5 where the temperature upon kneading was 140°C. This is because there is a boundary at 130°C and, when the temperature was higher than that, viscosity difference presumably due to evaporation became big.

About Group IV:

[0109] In this Group, although the use of the roll mill and the stirring were carried out at room temperature, there was a difference in the temperature upon a preliminary kneading before them.

[0110] To be more specific, as compared with Comparative Example 7 where the preliminary kneading was also carried out at room temperature, higher evaluations were resulted in Example 11 where the preliminary kneading was carried out at 40°C and in Example 12 where that was carried out at 120°C.

[0111] It is therefore likely again that dispersibility of the thickener improved when a preliminary kneading was carried out at higher temperature.

About Group V:

[0112] In Group V, after a preliminary stirring was carried out, a roll mill was used and then a planetary mixer was used.

[0113] Here, evaluation for Example 12 where the preliminary stirring and the use of the roll mill were conducted at room temperature and the planetary mixer was used at 60°C was high.

[0114] On the contrary, evaluation for Comparative Example 8 where the preliminary stirring was conducted at 120°C was low.

[0115] This is because, since the temperature of 120°C was applied before the dispersing step where the highest shearing force was applied, ethanol which is an auxiliary agent for swelling the clay thickener was evaporated whereby dispersions became big in all of the properties. Thus, since the temperature was made high prior to "a step for homogenizing thickener" according to the present invention, the evaluation became low.

[0116] There was a tendency that, in a bubbling test of Test 2, when stirring was carried out at higher temperature, the result was more advantageous. This is because, during the stirring at high temperature, the base oil was wetted even to an extent of the invisible bubbles remaining in the thickener.

[0117] The bubbling property was also good in the case where the temperature was higher than 130°C.

[0118] The same character was noted in the oil separation test of Test 3 and in the following property test of Test 4.

Thus, when the dispersibility of the thickener was good, the oil was hardly oozed out and, in addition, showed a good following property.

[0119] Exceptionally, in Comparative Example 4, the following property was not so good in spite of the fact that no oil was oozed out. This is because, although there was no problems for heat resistance of methyl hydrogen silicone which was an additive, a low molecular polybutene having a relatively low molecular weight (580 in average) was evaporated whereby viscosity of the base oil became high and, in addition, amount of the thickener increased relatively.

[0120] The same tendency as in the Examples of the present application was noted in the tests for reference where the followings were optionally combined:

Base oil: polybutene, liquid paraffin, spindle oil, dimethyl silicone oil and methyl phenyl silicone oil;

Thickener: Aerozyl R-972, R-974D, R-976D, RY-200, #200, 380, 300, 100, OX50, Titanium Dioxide P25 and Aluminium Oxide (trade names of Nippon Aerozyl Co., Ltd.), Benton 27, 34 and EW (trade names of Wilber-Ellis), synthetic smectite SAN, SAF and SWN (trade names of Cope Chemical) or the like; and

Additive: surfactant such as fluorine surfactant, silicone surfactant, polyoxyethylene derivatives, glycerol-polyglyc-

erol derivatives, sorbitan derivatives and phosphates silane coupling agent, aluminum coupling agent and titanium coupling agent.

[0121] As mentioned above, the method for manufacturing ink follower for a water-base ballpoint pen in accordance with the present invention is an excellent method, which is stable time-dependently, where the dispersibility of thickener is constant for every lot resulting in little viscosity difference and where fine bubbles existing in the thickener in the ink follower are removed resulting in prevention of bubble generation in a ballpoint pen holder during preservation.

Industrial Applicability

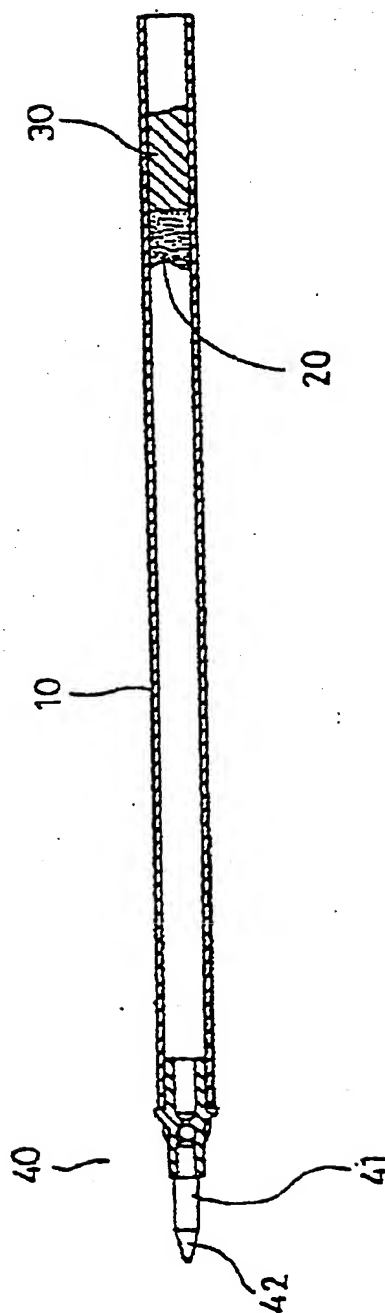
[0122] A method for manufacturing the ink follower for a water-base ballpoint pen in accordance with the present invention is utilized for manufacturing ink follower placed at the tail end part of ink received in an ink reservoir of a water-base ballpoint pen.

Claims

1. A method for manufacturing ink follower for a water-base ballpoint pen at least consisting of nonvolatile or hardly-volatile organic solvent and particulate thickener or clay thickener, comprising a step on which the thickener is homogenized at any temperature within a range of 40°C to 130°C.
2. A method for manufacturing ink follower for a water-base ballpoint pen at least consisting of nonvolatile or hardly-volatile organic solvent and particulate thickener or clay thickener, comprising a step on which the thickener is homogenized at any temperature within a range of 100°C to 130°C.
3. A method for manufacturing ink follower for a water-base ballpoint pen, comprising a step of homogenizing the ink follower represented by stirring, kneading, dispersing, etc. at any temperature of 40°C to 130°C;

a kind of solvent or mixture of some kinds of solvents selected from polybutene, liquid paraffin, highly purified mineral oil such as spindle oil and hardly-volatile silicone oil;
a kind or more of thicker selected from inorganic particulate thickener such as silica, alumina and titanium oxide and natural or synthetic smectite clay thickener lipophilized by an onium treatment or the like.

Fig. 1



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/JP98/03433

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER Int.Cl. ⁶ B43K7/02, C09K3/00		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) Int.Cl. ⁶ B43K7/02, B43K7/08, C09K3/00		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1922-1996 Toroku Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1994-1998 Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1971-1998 Jitsuyo Shinan Toroku Koho 1996-1998		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	JP, 6-33024, B2 (Pentel Co., Ltd.), 2 May, 1994 (02. 05. 94), Full text ; Particularly column 4, lines 38 to 48 (Family: none)	1-3
Y	JP, 6-33025, B2 (Pentel Co., Ltd.), 2 May, 1994 (02. 05. 94), Full text ; Particularly column 4, line 50 to column 5, line 11 (Family: none)	1-3
A	JP, 9-123666, A (Nippon Petrochemicals Co., Ltd.), 13 May, 1997 (13. 05. 97), Full text (Family: none)	1-3
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents: *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance *E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date *L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) *O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means *P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed *T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention *X* document of particular relevance: the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone *Y* document of particular relevance: the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art *Z* document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 16 October, 1998 (16. 10. 98)		Date of mailing of the international search report 27 October, 1998 (27. 10. 98)
Name and mailing address of the ISA/ Japanese Patent Office		Authorized officer
Facsimile No.		Telephone No.

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